

Forest Service and Panhandle Forest Collaborative Field Trip – Buckskin Saddle Integrated Restoration Project

September 20, 2017

Attendees:

Forest Service employees- Erick Walker, Kris Hennings, Brandon Glaza, Sean Stash, Dave Cobb, Doug Nishek, Ed Koberstein, Doug Wright, Dan Gilfillan, Sammy Brown, Larry Hartman, Luke Hixson, Sara Sink and Gina Davis (FHP).

Panhandle Forest Collaborative members- Ben Irely, Brad Smith, Erin Mader, Liz Johnson-Gebhardt, Laura Wolf, Bob Boeh, Mike Peterson, Allen Harper.

Others- Karen Roetter (U.S. Senator Mike Crapo's office), Judy Morbeck (U.S. Congressman Labrador's office) and Lawson Fite (General Counsel for the American Forest Resource Council).

Notes:

The field trip started at the Sandpoint Ranger Station at approximately 0845 with Erick Walker providing a brief summary of the objectives for the field trip and thanking the participants for helping to collaborate with the Forest Service. Dave Cobb then provided an overview of the project area, including a summary of the natural resources and human uses of the area. Ed Koberstein projected a number of maps onto the screen in the conference room showing such things as the roadless areas in the project area, the past fire history, the old growth stands, road systems, RHCA's, the Insect/Disease risk, the hiking and motorized trail system, the elk security areas, the flammulated owl habitat. Dave Cobb pointed out these items and presented a quick overview of the types of resource needs and opportunities that the IDT had identified thus far in the project area. Prior to this field trip, Ed Koberstein had send Ben Irely the maps discussed above, a draft agenda for the field trip, as well as a draft, very preliminary purpose and need statement. Ben Irely sent this material out to PFC members prior to the field trip.

The group left the Ranger Station and headed out to the project area around 0930. Bob Boeh, Mike Peterson, and Lawson Fite did not attend the field portion of the meeting while the other attendees did.

The group drove from Clark Fork south up into the project area up the Johnson Creek drainage via road 278 up to Johnson Saddle, then down the 278 road into the Granite Creek drainage.

Stop #1- The first stop of the trip was near the road 278/2706 junction at the bottom of the Granite Creek drainage. At that stop, the general discussion items included: the WUI in the area associated with the Granite Creek, Kilroy Bay and Pine Cove private land and homes/cabins, the Schafer Pk IRA in the area and implications from a fuel treatment perspective, the potential need for stand treatment of the dry PP/DF sites for flammulated owl habitat, and dry site old growth.

There was discussion about Community Protection Zones (CPZ's), WUI and what could or couldn't take place from a forest management sense in those areas. The Forest Service agree to do some "homework" on these topics to try and describe the "rules" and identify what decision space existed for active management to address hazardous fuels, flammulated owl habitat and dry site OG in the CPZ, WUI and Roadless Area. There was also a question about whether or not Bonner County had an emergency

evacuation plan that covered the Granite Creek/Kilroy Bay/Pine Cove area. The Forest Service agreed to do some homework on that item as well.

There was some discussion about why the project area boundary was placed where it was in the southwest portion of the project area and that there was a need to refine that boundary to better follow topographic/hydrological features. Ed K. and Erick mentioned that the area to the southwest of the Buckskin Saddle IRP project area was also on the 5-YAP as a project area, called Chloride Gold.

There was discussion on how large or comprehensive the Buckskin Saddle IRP should be- whether or not it would be a good idea to have a large, long-term stewardship type project or to do a more focused project. Lots of discussion on this topic occurred and Erick indicated that he would be discussing this with the Forest Supervisor (Mary Farnsworth). One theme of this discussion revolved around how to be most efficient in planning efforts and costs during the NFMA/NEPA stages.

Another discussion point at this stop was how best to involve/notify other publics and stakeholders who may not be represented by PFC. Liz and other PFC members indicated that they would be willing to help try and draw in other folks to participate in the collaborative planning steps.

The potential for new permanent road construction was discussed as the general project area does not have great access as far as stand treatment/fire suppression and other access. Laura mentioned that IF new permanent roads were constructed, that maybe there was a possibility to store some of them after the activities by doing a "front-end" obliteration in order to address elk security issues.

There were discussions about the potential of additional motorized trails and routes and Brad Smith mentioned that rather than additional trails, it might be prudent to focus on better maintenance of the existing motorized trail systems in the area.

We discussed visual/scenery resources a little bit at this stop and Doug mentioned that anything that could be seen from Lk Pend Oreille, the major travel routes (highways, county roads, etc) and any important view spots (like scenic overviews), would be carefully considered.

Heritage/Cultural resources were brought up and there was a brief discussion about how some of the Native American tribes (CDA, Kootenai, Kalispell and Salish confederated) may have special places and old travel routes along the ridges in the project area and maybe they would have concerns with new road construction along ridges. It was recognized that discussions/consultation would need to occur with them as the project is being planned.

There was a brief discussion about the potential to move the 278 road away from Granite Creek in order to reduce the amount of sediment reaching the stream. Also, Kris Hennings mentioned that Granite Creek had habitat for the harlequin duck, which is a sensitive species and thus it might benefit that duck species if the road was moved away from the creek. Lastly, there was some discussion about the ability of the Forest to take on a lot more Rx burning and how the Buckskin Saddle project might add a substantial amount of Rx burning to the Forest program. Brandon discussed how rolling dip construction could be considered in existing roads to get water off the road surfaces and potentially reduce sediment from getting into streams.

Stop #2- After leaving stop #1, the group headed back up the Granite Creek drainage on the 278 road and stopped at Johnson Saddle where the BPA powerline crossed over road 1066. The discussion at that

site focused on the powerline and potential fire hazards to the lines, Insect and Disease issues, scenery items and recreation topics.

Gina Davis talked about how the increase in insect and disease susceptible tree species (especially DF, GF) relative to historical conditions has tended to make the stands less productive and contain higher amounts of dead/dying trees and understocked stands. She pointed to open areas on the hillsides where root diseases had killed most of the trees in areas. She also mentioned that the aerial detection flights from this past summer had detected tree mortality from the balsam woolly adelgid (similar to an aphid) in subalpine fir at higher elevations near Packsaddle Mtn. There was a little discussion about SAF dying because of that adelgid, spruce because of the spruce bark beetle, and then the whitebark pine because of blister rust, mt pine beetle, and that lack of WBP regen. from fire suppression.

At this stop Dan Gilfillan talked about some recreation improvement/maintenance opportunities such as developing trailhead/parking areas for the trails in the project area (there is currently a lack of parking areas), expanding existing vista areas (or maintaining existing ones) in the project area, and doing trail maintenance work. Dan also mentioned that the Idaho Parks and Recreation (Nate Sparks) had some ideas of improving trails or creating easier trails for uses. It sounded like the existing trails, at least the motorized trails, were rather difficult for beginner or those who desired less challenging trails.

There was discussion of aspen restoration opportunities. Peg Polichio asked about ways that could be considered to create a landscape that was more resistant and resilient toward wildfires. Sara discussed patch sizes, breaking up the fuel continuity across the landscape, and related topics.

The group then travelled back down the Johnson Creek drainage on the 278 road to stop #3.

Stop #3- This stop occurred toward the bottom of the 278 road on a road switchback right above Johnson Creek. At this stop, Sean discussed the aquatic improvement opportunities that he and his folks had seen so far in the project area. Specifically he discussed the potential realignment of the 278 road near the stop to get the road further away from Johnson Creek (bull trout stream), opportunities to reduce sediment into that creek by addressing ditches that route sediment into the creek, the AOP blockage at the 1018 road on Johnson Creek, and the sediment/stream crossing issue on the motorized trail on trail #71. Lastly, Sean mentioned that there could be an opportunity to work with IFG & Avista to address the issue on Granite Creek on private land at the bottom of the drainage where stream braiding has occurred in the past.

Erick Walker facilitated a "wrap-up" discussion at the end of this stop and thanked everyone for attending the field trip.

Dave Cobb typed up these notes on 09/22/17 from his hand written notes that he took during the field trip.

Cobb, David F -FS

From: Koberstein, Edward A -FS
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2017 8:37 AM
To: Cobb, David F -FS
Cc: Walker, Erick -FS; Ben Ireys
Subject: RE: Buckskin Saddle Field Trip with PFC- Sept. 20

Draft itinerary:

Meet at Sandpoint RD @ 0800 – Intros, overview and vehicle logistics

Depart SPRD by 0900 for project area

1030 arrive at Stop #1 Lower Granite Creek – Discuss topics: WUI, fuel treatment opportunities, Dry site forest conditions, Old growth PP, Flammulated owl habitat, visuals.

Lunch 1130 - 1200, depart for stop #2

1230 arrive at stop #2 Granite Cr overview - discuss I&D conditions, transmission line corridor, view Packsaddle IRA, potential veg treatments, Elk security

1330 – depart for stop #3 Johnson Saddle

1400 – arrive at stop #3 Johnson Saddle project overview, recap veg treatment needs on dry and moist sites, protection of transmission line infrastructure, access, recreation opportunities.

1500 – depart for final stop #4 Johnson Cr Bridge (time allowing)

1530 – arrive at Johnson Cr, discuss AOP conditions and opportunities, close out topics

1630 – Head back to SPRD

1700 – ETA back at Sandpoint office

Bring lunches, field going boots and appropriate clothing. Prepare for a long day and nature's bathroom facilities.



Ed Koberstein
North Zone TMA/Veg Staff

Forest Service
Idaho Panhandle NF

p: 208-267-6729
c: 208-451-5021
ekoberstein@fs.fed.us

6286 Main Street
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805
www.fs.fed.us



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